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1963/11/02

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

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Action

Control:

1167

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Rec'd:

NOVEMBER 2, 1963

8:45 AM

FE

Info

FROM: SAIGON

SS

TO: Secretary of State

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INR

NO: 888, NOVEMBER 2, 8 PM

RMR

IMMEDIATE

1. VERY RELIABLE SOURCE GIVES FOLLOWING STORY ABOUT DEATH OF DIEM AND NHU:

THEY LEFT THE PALACE ON FRIDAY EVENING ACCOMPANIED BY CHINESE BUSINESSMAN WHO WAS THE ORGANIZER OF THE REPUBLICAN YOUTH IN THE CHINESE TOWN OF CHOLON. THIS MAN HAD ENGAGED IN THIS WORK NOT BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN IT BUT IN THE INTERESTS OF AVOIDING TROUBLE FOR THE CHINESE COMMUNITY.

THIS CHINESE TOOK DIEM AND NHU TO A CLUBHOUSE WHICH HE OWNED WHERE THEY ARRIVED AT ABOUT NINE O'CLOCK. DIEM AND NHU, THROUGH THIS CHINESE BUSINESSMAN, MADE A STRONG EFFORT TO HAVE CHINAT EMBASSY GIVE THEM ASYLUM, DID NOT SUCCEED.

AFTER SPENDING THE NIGHT IN THE CLUBHOUSE THEY, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING WENT TO CHURCH AND ABOUT 10 MINUTES AFTER THAT WERE PICKED UP BY THE ARMY AND WERE FORCED TO ENTER AN ARMY VEHICLE INTO WHICH THEY WERE LOCKED. THIS SOURCE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT - WHETHER THEY ARE ALIVE OR MURDERED OR SUICIDES.

2. LUONG, FINANCE MINISTER IN DIEM GOVERNMENT, TOGETHER WITH THUAN AND FORMER ECONOMIC MINISTER THANH, SPENT SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT GENERALS' HEADQUARTERS. GENERAL BIG MINH TOLD HIM THAT DIEM AND NHU HAD BEEN FOUND IN A CHURCH IN CHOLON AT ABOUT 8 A.M. THIS MORNING AND WERE LOCKED UP INSIDE AN ARMY VEHICLE. DUE TO AN INADVERTENCE THERE WAS A GUN INSIDE THE VEHICLE. IT WAS WITH THIS GUN, SAID BIG MINH, THAT THEY COMMITTED SUICIDE.

DECLASSIFIED
PUBLISHED IN FRUS 1961-63

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VCL IV DOC # 273
By mmB NARA, Date 4/27/93

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-2- 888, NOVEMBER 2, 8 PM, FROM SAIGON

3. OTHER VERSIONS RECEIVED FROM CAS SOURCES:

A. ACCORDING ONE CAS REPORT, COL. PHAM NGOC THAO SAID AT 1130 NOVEMBER 2, THAT HE, WITH HIS FORCES, HAD ENTERED GIA LONG PALACE IN EARLY MORNING HOURS FOR PURPOSE OF ESCORTING DIEM AND NHU TO JGS HQS AFTER THEIR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER. FOLLOWING SEARCH, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT DIEM AND NHU WERE NOT AT GIA LONG AND HAD NOT BEEN THERE DURING COURSE OF COUP. THAO RETURNED TO JGS WITH THIS INFORMATION. THERE FOLLOWED CHECK OF VILLAS IN SAIGON/CHOLON KNOWN TO BE USED BY NGO FAMILY.

DETAIL, UNDER PERSONAL DIRECTION OF GEN MAI HUU XUAN, LOCATED DIEM AND NHU AT VILLA ON PHUNG HUNG ST., CHOLON. XUAN RETURNED TO JGS WITH BODIES OF DIEM AND NHU. NOTHING IS KNOWN ABOUT ACTUAL CAUSE OF THEIR DEMISE.

B. ANOTHER CAS REPORT INDICATES THAT LT. NGUYEN NGOC LINH, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL NGUYEN KHANH, CG, II CORPS, AND AT PRESENT IN SAIGON, SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY VIEWED AT 1330 NOVEMBER 2, BODIES OF DIEM AND NHU AT JGS HQS AND THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF MISTAKEN IDENTITIES. LINH SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT DIEM AND NHU HAD BEEN ASSASSINATED, IF NOT BY XUAN PERSONALLY, AT LEAST AT HIS DIRECTION.

WHILE ABOVE APPARENTLY CONFIRMED INFORMATION, IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT CURRENT SITUATION IN SAIGON IS MADE TO ORDER FOR ANY SPECULATION SURROUNDING DIEM AND NHU.

ACCORDING TO THAO AND LINH, DIEM AND NHU COULD HAVE MAINTAINED TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS FROM CHOLON VILLA THROUGHOUT COUP SINCE LINES RUN FROM GIA LONG PALACE TO THU DUC, AND FROM THU DUC TO CHOLON VILLA.

C. STILL ANOTHER CAS REPORT INDICATES RELIABLE SOURCE AT JGS WAS TOLD BY GENERALS BIG MINH AND LITTLE MINH AND OTHER OFFICERS THA

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-3- 888, NOVEMBER 2, 8 PM, FROM SAIGON

DIEM AND NHU ESCAPED FROM GIA LONG PALACE SHORTLY AFTER 0700 HOURS, NOVEMBER 2, BY THIRD TUNNEL WHICH WAS UNKNOWN TO GENERALS. DIEM AND NHU LEFT TUNNEL IN DOCK AREA AND THEN WENT TO DON THANH CHINESE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CHOLON, WHERE THEY TOOK POISON. DIEM AND NHU WERE FOUND AT CHURCH AT 1030 HRS. USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE WAS OFFERED OPPORTUNITY TO SEE REMAINS OF DIEM AND NHU, OFFER WHICH HE DECLINED. CAS SOURCE HAS STRONG IMPRESSION THAT DIEM AND NHU ARE DEAD AND BODIES ARE AT JGS.

D. FINALLY, ANOTHER CAS OFFICER WAS INFORMED BY OFFICER OF J-2, JGS, THAT PRESIDENT DIEM, HIS BROTHER AND ONE PRESIDENTIAL ORDERLY WERE CAUGHT AND KILLED BY PERSONNEL UNDER DIRECTION OF GEN MAI HUU XUAN AT CHURCH IN CHO QUAN, CHOLON. ALSO CAPTURED WITH THEM WAS CAPT DO HAI, NEPHEW OF DO MAU, CHIEF OF MILITARY SECURITY SERVICE.

GP-3.

LODGE

BAP

NOTE: ADVANCE COPY DELIVERED TO S/S-O AT 11/2/63 9:11 AM
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 11/2/63 9:28 AM

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